



Senator Feinstein Seeks Tougher Penalties For Injuring or Killing a  
Pregnant Women and Her Fetus  
March 23, 2004

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) announced the introduction of legislation today to increase penalties for offenders who commit violent federal crimes against pregnant women and cause their pregnancies to be terminated or interrupted.

Senator Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) has introduced similar legislation designed to deter and punish criminals, but it also has the effect of defining life as beginning at conception. Senator Feinstein's bill, however, does not define when life begins, thereby accomplishing the same goal without entangling the issue in the controversial abortion debate.

**“Someone who attacks a pregnant woman, and damages or destroys her pregnancy should receive a tougher penalty for these horrible crimes,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“This bill focuses on the harm to the woman’s pregnancy rather than defining when human life begins. It is simply not necessary to get involved in the issue of how to define when life begins in order to punish those who commit grievous acts against pregnant women.”**

The *Motherhood Protection Act* was introduced Monday. It would allow prosecutors to “double charge” a defendant for a crime against a pregnant woman that interrupts or terminates her pregnancy.

The first charge would be for harm to the woman and the second charge would be for harm to the pregnancy. Thus, a separate offence is created based on the harm to the pregnancy.

More than 300,000 American women are subjected to domestic violence during their pregnancies each year. Additionally, homicide during pregnancy and in the year following birth is the leading pregnancy-related cause of death among women in the U.S., according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.

**“We have heard many heart wrenching stories about women whose pregnancies were terminated and about how the individuals who perpetrated those attacks remain unpunished for their crimes,”** Senator Feinstein added. **“These attacks sicken me. I believe that people who attack pregnant women and terminate or harm their pregnancy must be punished harshly.”**

Under an earlier agreement, the Senate will soon consider the Feinstein and DeWine bills. **“I find it deeply troubling that the United States Senate will be given six and half hours to debate and decide on the deeply divisive issue of when human life begins without so much as a committee hearing or a markup.”**